

OP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DD/A Registry

File

Personnel

TAPE 56

INTERVIEW: William E. Colby with [REDACTED]

STATINTL

SUBJECT : Personnel Administration in a Time of Change,
1972-76

LOCATION : [REDACTED]

DATE : 27 July 1976

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NOTE: Only Mr. Colby's remarks were taped. The questions were added to the transcript and represented either the items specified in the Outline or a summary of the discussions between recorded segments. Mr. Colby was DCI from September 1973 to January 1976.

Our concentration, Mr. Colby, is on the '72-76 period in Personnel Administration but you can start with any remarks you care to make. For example, when did you first become aware of personnel administration?

000 Well, I to start with, I suppose I first became interested in personnel as a result of being in the Army from an Army family and a feeling of the importance of leadership. I have always preferred to use the word leadership as the function of the government executive. I think leadership is the proper relationship one should have with one's subordinate employees. Leadership obviously involves telling people what you want them to do, it involves more than that however, it involves following up to see whether they did it; and it involves a certain amount of inspiration and action on your own part to show the kind of thing that you expect to be done, and that you are willing to do it yourself. That kind of effort is essential to leadership. Therefore, in my relations when I was abroad, at various stations, when I was Chief of Station and then when I was Chief of the Division, I spent a great deal of time worrying about the individual members of the organization that I was part of, I tried to step in and help them with their problems. I tried to correct them (subordinates) and encourage them to solve their problems rather than to discipline them as a way of getting changes made. Obviously when you get to higher levels of the organization you cannot have the direct personal contact with the very junior levels because you just run out of time, run out of familiarity so therefore you have to set up a structure that does that job. You can still maintain a certain personal relationship, which I tried to do, for example, by various talks to the employees,

by insisting that the subordinate organizations in the Agency have an annual meeting at which the boss tells his employees what they are doing and where they are going. The business of inviting three or four junior and middle grade employees from various Offices and Divisions to have lunch with me in the cafeteria, things of that nature, gave an informal feel for what they thought and for what their problems were. It gave me some chance of a personal relationship with the different generations and with the different expertise, the different level of responsibility. This sort of leadership relationship is called for in any kind of an organized activity. It obviously applies to the DDO functions of leadership in a station. It also applies to an analytical shop in the DDI, an engineering project in the DDS&T, the various kinds of support services provided by the DDA. All of these require that the leader of the activity have a relationship with his subordinates bring them along, get them interested, check up on them, know them, know what is going on, know what they feel. When you get to a senior level and cannot do all this job yourself, you do a certain amount of it to indicate that it is the thing to do, that you have the interest. Occasionally you learn things out of those contacts that would not come up through the normal chain. But primarily I think you do it as an example of the way you expect the other leaders in the organization to behave. It (leadership) needs more than that. I think it needs some kind of a structure, some kind of an organized system to manage personnel.

What do you see as the role of the Office of Personnel and the Personnel Officer?

050 Here I get to one of the fundamental arguments about personnel administration, whether it is a line function or whether it is a staff function. Obviously from the background I have given you I think of it more as line, a command function. The individual chief of the unit has to make the decision, has to have the relationship with the employees that is essentially that of personnel management or leadership. The Office of Personnel or the personnel officer in the unit can help, can keep the Records straight, can provide the background, offer the opportunities for training, for movement, things of that nature. But essentially I think that the individual leader at whatever level has to take the full responsibility for the direction and leadership of his people.

You were more active than most DCI's in the personnel administration field. What about the Annual Personnel Plan (APP) for instance?

056 Right there (referring to above) is the reason I became interested in the Annual Personnel Plan. The APP is a plan

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designed to force the leader to focus on his personnel responsibilities. The numbers involved, and all the record keeping, is really a vehicle to provide the leader in somewhat easily comprehended form, some basic questions about how he is managing his people. When you show him what his promotion rates are, his in-put rates, his retirement rates, and all the other rates, and when you show him how many medals his people have won, in the past year, when you compare the various grade ratings for the minorities and women, when you show him the time in grade of his people, he learns something. But he learns even more when he sees that figure, referring to him, contrasted with another manager somewhere else. His initial reaction is to develop a very fertile explanation for the differences between two situations which justify the different records. But if you (the Director) knock some of those down you begin to make him think that maybe there is something he ought to be doing. It isn't quota establishment, or forcing him (the Manager) to make false decisions but it (the APP process) makes him focus on the problem of management. For instance it has always been a kind of horror to me when an employee told me that he had been in a certain Division for three years and had never seen his Division Chief. Well, that's absurd! And that was the origin of the little item in the Annual Personnel Plan which requires that each Unit have an annual meeting at which the manager tells the people what is going on, from his personal assistants to the lowest clerk handling the mail somewhere down the hall.

Can you say more on the explanations you got for non-performance?

One of the fertile explanations usually given is that, 'we are taking care of that, or we are doing that' It is alright it's being done,' 'I (the manager) am spending time worrying about this (the APP)! Well the only way to overcome that is to show the objective results in the numbers. And if the numbers show that one division, for the last five years, had no women in a position over GS-12 and the neighboring Divisions or Offices show some progress in that area the fact that he (the manager) says he is doing it is contradicted by the results of what has actually happened. He is not doing it, no matter whether he is trying or not, he is not doing it. Therefore you have an objective measurement you can apply to him and then get his (the manager's) attention in that fashion. Make him change what he is doing perhaps to reflect what he needs to do, rather than just to say he is doing it or again he might say that he is frustrated by the fact that he does not have good candidates. Well, if he (the manager) does not have good candidates it is his job to go out and find them, and find them, and entice them into his Unit so that he can

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have good candidates to promote. This (the previous statement) is the minority problem. The easy explanation is that you (the manager) don't have qualified candidates, that you would be engaging to tokenism and quotaism and artificial promotions and things of that nature. Well, baloney! The fact is that you don't want that sort of thing and neither do the minorities. They don't want token promotions. That leads to more troubles later than the promotion is worth. What you do need is a vigorous effort by the management to go out and locate the qualified people and give them the kinds of training and the kinds of jobs that put them in the zone of consideration. Then they can compete on an equal basis.

095 Obviously some of the activities and projects will meet a certain amount of resistance. Some of the explanations as to why progress has not been made are real. It is true that CIA is way out in the country a long way from the black sections of the North East. Consequently it is hard to hire people to come here, sure, and you have to make a special effort to attract them, but you can and I think this is what the Agency is calling for.

Suppose there are some people who just don't agree, either ideologically or intellectually, with the idea of equal employment opportunity? Think that's hurting the Agency?

105 Well, there are some things that you are required by law to agree to if you are going to hold a government job. There is no question about what the law says. Whether (the individual manager) agrees with it or not, the law says it. So consequently there cannot be any choice, either he obeys the law, follows the law, or he cannot continue to hold the job. Now the question is, can you get him (the manager) to get interested in it. I have seen a lot of people get interested in it (EEO). They find out that it really is feasible to make some progress.

Would the fundamental disagreement on EEO be sufficient reason in your mind for removing a line manager from his post?

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I think that the subordinate chiefs, branch chiefs, station chiefs, the division chiefs, in the DDI, these chiefs will pretty quickly react to what their bosses tell them is important. If they (the Bosses) really expect some progress, then they the subordinates will be inclined to move in that direction. They (the Chiefs) will wonder whether it is lip service, and they may try to dodge it a little bit, with a little lip service, but that is the whole function of leadership, to force a program on people whether they like it or not. The organization cannot be run in an anarchical fashion with every individual deciding what he thinks he ought to do. You (the boss) have to listen to their problems, you have to help them solve their problems, not stonewall them, but I think in personnel management as with operations, you have got to insist that there are certain overall policies and principles that are set upon us by our superiors either in the Congress or even in the Constitution. The Civil Service Commission (rules) are applicable too, whether they are directly applicable or not, which are set upon us by political imperatives which we violate at our peril, of having another investigation of us on that subject some day. Consequently I think that you can convince people that you need to move in these directions. If you really get a one hundred percent recalcitrant (person) then you have to find a job for him down in Lower Patagonia or some place; or, face up to the problem of a serious defiance of authority and parting of the ways.

How about a minority quota, Would that actually be better? and should the Director of Personnel have hiring authority to accomplish the objective?

130 Well that idea of a quota is against the rules for one thing, the government wide rules. It also creates artificial answers which don't work and you end up with more trouble than would (be involved) with a genuine effort to try to make real progress. You end up with dissatisfied employees, the minorities, you end up with discrimination, against whites, which is subject to court nowadays; you end up with a feeling of fakery instead of doing the job seriously. I think you destroy the basic morale and integrity of the organization. If you start down the road. I end up with the proposition, who is really responsible for leadership, and it is the individual leader of the individual unit. If you push somebody on to somebody he will be treated as an outcast, and the individual won't be allowed to play his real role. I think you have to accomplish it (EEO) in the hard way, that of convincing each one of the chiefs all around that it is his responsibility to go out and find some friend of

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his son who had graduated from school with him who happens to be a minority but who has the qualifications; and get him (the minority) interested. Issue the challenge of the actual substantive work of the Agency which is interesting and fascinating. If you have a central office impose these people on a unit, it won't work because the responsibility then become Personnel's instead of the individual manager, or leader.

You were closely associated with other personnel plans, for example, the Personnel Approaches Study Group?

150 The PASG was an effort to identify some of the open questions about our personnel management, some of those things that have been debated around the hall for years, and not really straightened out one way or the other. Rather than having some genius go aside and develop a perfect system and then impose it on the Agency, I thought it essential to involve the people in the Agency in a review of the system; to get them to produce these improvements, get them to discuss and argue about them. You would then have a basis for expecting the thing to work and not just be applying a blueprint on the Agency that really would not fit the machinery and then you would have sort of two levels, one real and one paper. Therefore, as I recall, it was almost a year's study that lead up to PASG. The various Directorates were represented they each had their chance to comment on, approve, or disapprove. Eventually we issued the plan. I think it has been a step ahead. We still have a ways to go. However we have a real dilemma here in the Agency. The real dilemma is the enormous mix of kinds of jobs we have. It is popular to talk about rotation and getting experiences in different Divisions or Directorates but the fact is that you cannot take a case officer from the middle of [redacted] and send him in to help work one of the complicated DDS&T projects. You cannot take an economist from OER and send him out to be a case officer milling around Africa. A lot of these specialties are just not exchangeable, and consequently there are some real limitations on the degree of interchange possible. In that sense I think it is probably just as well to have four different career

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The Personnel Approaches Study Group (PASG) recommendation issued as an Employee Bulletin on 1 April 1974 reduced the 23 Career Services to 5 and gave the Deputy Directors specific duties and responsibilities for personnel management of their people.

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systems separate so that the people do compete against like jobs and like kinds of talents. Otherwise it would be most difficult. You would end up with a kind of automatic informal sharing of the wealth on promotions but the competitive aspect might be lost, if you put it all in one big bundle. Some jobs are subject to a lot more consolidation, like secretarial and some of the clerical work. Obviously it is unfortunate when you find a particular talent in one division getting GS-13 while in the next division the same talent gets a GS-11 just because of the way the ball bounced one time. We have tried to get as much exposure of these inconsistencies and some resolution of the way people are treated.

Doesn't this Policy PASG for that matter add unduly to the Power of the Deputies over their People? Add to the Baronies?

175 The way to solve the problem of the baronies and the separate lives of the different elements of the Agency is more and more in pull the experts in their different fields into direct contact with each other, rather than (introduce) an artificial (notion) of equality. Make the operations people talk to the analyst; make the analysts talk to the engineers. Don't (have them) scare each other by feeling that one can't possibly talk to somebody in another Directorate because it is a little bit worse than talking to the KGB. I think that is the solution. The Office of Training has done some work of exposing the different activities. I think really that the last year's investigation did a little bit of it, too. It pulled out of the closet some of the things we had kept secret which really, probably, were not all that secret in terms of contacts between different elements of the Agency. As a member of the Agency I think one needs a pretty good feel for what the Agency does, even though you don't need to know the in-depth sources of the particular sensitive machinery. You do need to know generally what things are about. I think that is the way to solve the problem of isolation, to develop some respect for the contribution made by the analyst, the engineer, the operations officer, the administrative officer. Get some respect for the challenge involved. A lot of the operations people have a lot of respect for the logistics people, and the finance people, because they have seen them work, they have seen them contribute around the work. That kind of respect for the other man's efforts, because one is exposed to what they are, is the way to overcome some of the sharp divisions that have characterized the Agency.

Now, what about your relationships down, that is, within the organization?

200 The relationships down are part of the leadership problem. The question is one of information, how much are you putting down the line. I used to wonder from time to time whether we ought to put out some kind of a house organ. People always said it was too complicated because of the questions of secrecy. Well, NSA puts one out and various other agencies do and I was never totally convinced that it was not feasible. It would be a vehicle to let the people know generally whose who and what is going on. We put up bulletin boards and put various things on them. I notice the DDI has put up a separate bulletin board of their own which is great. I think each Division or Unit ought to have one so that there can be better communication on a regular basis. The business of senior management knowing what is going on is a matter of multiplicity of channels. Yes, you have the command channel and that is supposed to work. But there are a lot of things that get in the way including just plain time - and - not with any bad faith involved, but the command channel is apt to put the rosy look upwards. The channel down to can get clogged at certain choke points in the system. The information never gets down below that particular point into the whole area of the organizational body. So therefore I think you have to develop channels up, like Inspector Generals, like direct channels to your people, like training course where you can talk informally, like the Management Advisory Groups, not only on the over-all level but also on the Directorate level. I think each Office or Division ought to have some kind of way for its junior employees to communicate. Upward information can also come from the various offices, like the Office of Personnel for example which tells you (the Director) about (personnel) matters, like the Audit Staff which tells you about finance problems, like many other ways in which people can communicate, even to having an open door yourself (as Director), being ready to receive people who walk in. It used to happen every now and again, somebody would come in, ask to see me, close the door and we would talk and I would learn something. I would try to do what I could to indicate that I was interested and would try to solve the problem. Multiple channels down would include the command channel, maybe a little forcing of it, but also the employee bulletins to try to keep people advised, the general meetings for instance all the supergrades, thus the exercise twice a year of promoting new supergrades where you gather all the supergrades together. You (the DCI) can talk to them and obviously it filters down below them. Then there are other kinds of meetings like the annual Awards ceremonies where you

pass the information to a mix of people.

Five goals were named by Mr. Hampton, Chairman U. S. Civil Service Commission for management development plans in his letter of Sept 1971 to the DCI. They were:

A High Level of Organization Commitment

Development Plan for each Mid-Manager of High Potential and each Incumbent Executive

Improved Mobility Programs

More Effective Training Resource Utilization

Improved Development Program Evaluation

Do you think the PDP (Personnel Development Plan) and the Agency achieved them?

265 With respect to the list of goals I think the organization actually was doing fairly well on personnel development even before this kind of a thing came along. The PDP kind of formalized it and allowed us to track it a little better. Actually the record of the organization in encouraging the development of talent, in making assignments, is really pretty good anyway. Certainly the training record is very good. CIA does very well with its training. In that sense I think we were doing fairly well and the PDP just gave it another little shove. Essentially PDP formalized the different activities in different parts of the Agency.

The next item concerns the post of Executive Director Comptroller. Ex-Dir was always a power source for Personnel particularly on classification disagreements. Why did you abolish it?

280 The executive Director abolishment is a little bit contentious. I did it because I felt that it was very difficult to have an Executive Director who did not ride over the functions of the DDA and make that post difficult. I did not think it was good to have an Executive Director who got into the middle of the relationship between the Director and the Deputies, kind of an Army Chief of Staff technique. Direct dealings between the Director and the Deputies is essential. I frankly think that the problem is now moot because we now have the opposite of what we had when I was there. When I was there you a careerist as Director (Richard Helms) and an outside military

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officer as Deputy. If the Director was to have some of his time saved from management of the Agency then the tendency was to try to get an Executive Director to take over some of that. The Deputy Director, with the best will in the world, as a military outsider, had a tough time fitting into the dirty details of the management of the Agency. In my case, as in Helm's case, I think General Walters did a spectacular job but management was not his job. His was a very special contribution to substantive intelligence, I thought; as well as one of contact with various foreigners around the world where he was terribly valuable. Now the Agency has an outsider as Director, one who can take a broad look at the whole community and a broad look at CIA. He is supported by a community Deputy to help him with the community and the community staff, and he is supported by a careerist as the Deputy for CIA. Now he the career Deputy can get into the management of (CIA) in great detail, and so consequently I think the contribution of the Executive Director may have made in the past is apt to be made by the Deputy the DDCI, in terms of the management of CIA. He (the Deputy) will be able to provide that detailed level of management that the Director does not have time for and that an outside Director would not be apt to get into anyway. An inside Director would be inclined to do it himself, which was exactly what both Helms and I did.

At this point in the interview Mr. Colby, on his own, returned to his observations on personnel development in the Agency

The question of development of personnel is really a very complicated one. Some employees read all the literature and expect the Agency to manage their future. Other employees consider that the management of their future is their own responsibility. The Agency only has a peripheral and minimum involvement. They will take care of themselves, thank you very much and get off my back. I think that what you (the management) have to do in personnel management is in this regard is to be sure that you communicate the possibilities to your employees so that they can see what the potentials of different courses of action are. Whether they want to become a generalist, whether they want to become an operator, whether they want to become an analyst, whether they want to become a specialist in some particular subject, the world's best expert in something, that's up to them.

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TAPE 57

INTERVIEW: William E. Colby with [REDACTED] (Cont'd)

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SUBJECT : Personnel Administration in a Time of Change,
1972-76

LOCATION : [REDACTED]

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DATE : 27 July 1976

NOTE: Only Mr. Colby's remarks were taped. The questions were added to the transcript and represented either the items specified in the Outline or a summary of the discussions between recorded segments.

Your previous remarks on employee development and the difference in people and what they expect gets us into the question of motivation. What makes the CIA'er Tick?

000 I think the attraction of a career in CIA involves several things. First, and most important, it is quite obviously and clearly a career which contributes to the safety and welfare of our contry. Consequently I think the people who enter the intelligence service have much the same patriotic motives as people who enter the foreign service or the military service. Secondly I think there is the fascination in the work itself, the intellectual challenges, the challenges of thinking up new ways of obtaining intelligence, the fascination of trying to understand foreign cultures and working among them, the challenges of trying to comprehend the new relationships of science and technology with the liberal arts. Watching the jig saw puzzle of total intelligence being put together, piece by piece; either by the individual collector or the analyst, the engineer or the support officer, I think that involves really a fascination. People enjoy it, they are interested in it, they are challenged by it, and get rewards from it.

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I think that our grade structure is reasonable, government salaries these days are reasonably competitive with other ways in which people could spend their lives, so I think that the financial aspect, while it is not an attraction, neither is it a discouragement. You (generic) can educate your kids, and live decently on the kinds of salaries and so forth that you get. Fundamentally I think the attraction is the fascination of the work and the patriotic aspect.

A high ranking Foreign Service officer writing in their Journal stated recently that not much could be expected of CIA since it was staffed by people who were willing to work anonymously; or words to that effect. What do you think about that?

030 People wonder why CIA people do not object to the anonymity involved. Actually, I think that there are many CIA people who are delighted with it. They don't have to stand up and go through the somewhat frustrating public exposures, the somewhat difficult social relationships that are involved, the kind of a public job or career that demands a great deal of socializing within the career itself. Obviously, our operations officers do socialize within the career itself. Obviously, our operations officers do socialize with their foreign contacts a great deal, of course, but I think the anonymity is not a negative feature. It is sometimes rather comforting one (thought) that you don't have to waste your time on that kind of thing. You can put your total effort toward the most attractive aspects of the job which is the fascination of getting it done. I think the discipline, the security discipline, the limitation on the family's knowledge of what you do that is a bit of a harassment but again I think that is the kind of a thing that fits into the patriotism, then acceptance of a career discipline. I think most families very quickly accept this.

What about the families of our people? Their position is kind of awkward, isn't it?

035 I think the families very quickly accept this (career discipline) and very loyally support it. Really, I think we have been very well helped by all our families.

(Mr. Colby then continued on the motivation theme)

038 Incidentally I think this fascination quality of the job should really be our major appeal for recruitment

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with the patriotism as a support, This is the way that we can attract the people who would be most interested and most challenged and the most productive in the long run.

Do you think the Agency has been hurt by the cut-backs in personnel? They have been quite drastic.

041 Obviously the number of jobs, the reductions in strength and so forth are really a reflection of the need. During the colder days of the cold war there was an enormous need and we consequently expanded. But as those days declined and we got out of much of our para-military activity and political action, certain other things grew, the "S and T" area for example, even compensated I guess you would say. Certain other productivity improvements were made through the machine management of many things both in the analytical world and in the record keeping on the administrative side. These did not give us savings but they gave us higher productivity so that I think we have actually managed a very substantial reduction with minimum hurt to the people involved.

The reduction over the past, I guess it is almost ten years now -- since about '66 or '67 -- has been very substantial.* It has been handled with only one or two problem areas or periods where people worried about the future, whether they had a future and whether things were going to go ahead. In most cases we absorbed these reductions by attrition, so we continued to recruit young people into the organization so that we would not have an artificial hump in the future. I think the Agency, with the cost of personnel these days, is probably going to continue to decline a bit but within limits that won't really harm the individuals involved because it will be handled in this fashion. There has to be change as the mission changes and as the problems we face change. I think we can change the organization to reflect these changes and still carry on the main mission and not create any serious morale problems or harmful impact on our people.

Do you believe the Agency is still suffering from the "Island in the Sea of Government Syndrome?"

062 I think this about the degree to which the Agency runs a totally separate structure, a separate management existence, and the degree to which it is a part of the United

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States Government. When the Agency started it was very consciously set up as something special, in a corner, not expected to apply the normal rules. We ourselves had to adopt a number of the regular rules just to have a rule to handle large numbers of people -- but -- I think the process is going on to make the intelligence service, and the CIA, more and more a normal part of our government, and less and less a different kind of a thing off in a corner. It will be a career service but I think it will compare more to the career service of the Foreign Service, Treasury, Agriculture and to some of the other services that do exist in our government and have overall rules applying to them, carrying on business in a more normal way.

I think we can still do our unique work, having unique capabilities for unique situations but we don't need to handle things through unique methods which can be handled through normal methods. I think we (CIA) are going to be under increasing pressure from Congress and the public to justify any abnormal use of our authorities except in abnormal situations called for by our particular mission. Not just, as we were somehow inclined to do in the old days, say the whole thing is 'secret', the whole thing has to be handled in a separate fashion. I think this (chance) process is going on. It will create a little trouble for us in our working machinery from time to time, but I think that we are apt to get more confidence from our Congressional oversight than from other parts of the government. As a result and consequently, we should come out about even or maybe ahead, as a result of the process.

Can you say something about the Office of Personnel itself? How has it performed in your view?

085 The Office of Personnel has done, I think, a very fine job. It has managed the overall records and all the requirements very well. The record keeping is not unduly burdensome. The Fitness Report argument will go on forever but nonetheless, we have one (A Fitness Report) and I think it works about as well as any others in the world. It (the Fitness Report) certainly works better than some of the services I was acquainted with in my job outside the Agency. If you (collective) did not get one hundred percent on your ratings you were consigned to perdition. Ours is inclined to try to give a fair feeling in the paper.

I am particularly impressed with the recruitment people who have had a very difficult time but who I think have done

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an outstanding job in recent years, under public pressure, riots and attack. I was particularly impressed with the way they went out in 1974 and raised our number of black entries, not just applicants, but entries by a very substantial percentage just because they decided that was what was wanted and they went out and did it. They did very, very well in that respect.

105 You (collective) are always going to have a tension between the Office of Personnel's desire to run things on the basis of Agency-wide standards and the ability of each individual office and division around the Agency to think up some reason why they are special and have to be run on a separate standard. We just have to page our way through these one by one. There won't be any overall solutions.

(Mr. Colby continued on the Office of Personnel question.)

I want to put in a special word for the Benefit and Services people. I think the Agency's record of handling its mission, the people who were captured in other countries, has been spectacular. I think the individuals involved (the MIA's) are deeply appreciative of the human side of the Agency's feeling for them and (it's) loyalty to them, even when they were long gone and far away and out of contact.

I think also the tradition of the Agency in trying to take care of its own, has worked in many, many ways. This applies not only to personnel; it applies to the Security Office, the Medical Staff, it applies to a lot of different organizations -- the feeling of support and assistance to members of the CIA family as shown in the benefits and services, the Credit Union, Insurance Branch -- all the different activities that are sponsored and promoted by the Office of Personnel. In that sense I think the Office (of Personnel) has a permanent function, a very good one, and I think (the Office of Personnel) has been doing it extremely well.

120 End of Tape 57.

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